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# Development Guide for Small Business

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Indianapolis: A city that knows small business is big business



Greetings,

Indianapolis is in aggressive pursuit of new business growth and development. We are quickly being recognized for these efforts as more and more businesses are planting their roots here and taking advantage of our eager, talented workforce, low cost of doing business, predictable tax climate and central location.

In fact, we consistently rank among the top places to do business nationally:

- #1 Midwestern City to be the Next Big Boom Town (*Forbes*)
- Top 7 Hub Cities for Business Startups (*Wall Street Journal*)
- Top Ten Cities Poised for Economic Recovery (*Newsweek*)
- Top Ten Cities to Relocate to (*CNBC*)
- #1 City with Good Jobs and Cheap Housing (*Investopedia*)
- 4th Most Affordable City in U.S. (*Forbes*)
- 5th Best Metro Area for Business (*Area Development*)

This guide was developed to help take the guesswork out of licensing, permitting and zoning processes. We know development projects are critical steps in growing your business, and we also know how important it is to complete these projects seamlessly and efficiently.

We are delighted that you are investing in our community by growing your business here, and we are excited about the opportunity to help make your project a success.

We look forward to serving you.

Gregory A. Ballard  
Mayor  
City of Indianapolis

Scott Miller  
CEO  
Develop Indy



Use this guide to help navigate your way to a successful project

# Helpful Hints for a Successful Project

## #1

### Your site may need to be rezoned or a variance may need to be granted

#### **Impact**

A rezoning or variance of use petition would be necessary to change a zoning district from one classification to another. For example, a rezoning petition would be needed to change a residential zoning classification from residential to a commercial classification.

Typically, a rezoning petition must follow a three-step hearing process, the Hearing Examiner, the Metropolitan Development Commission (MDC) and the City-County Council. An approval petition usually must follow a two-step hearing process, the Hearing Examiner and the MDC.

#### **Helpful Hints**

Work closely with Develop Indy's Director of Engagement and the Department of Metropolitan Development staff to help you navigate this process.

Remember that in order for a rezoning petition to be heard by the MDC or Hearing Examiner, it must be filed, with consent of the property owner(s), at least 35 days before a scheduled hearing. Each petition, timely filed and complete, is docketed for hearing. Generally, in order to file a complete application, the following would be required:

- A completed application form
- Consent of the property owner
- A legal description, with recorded plat or a perimeter survey for metes and bounds descriptions,
- A zoning base map
- Rezoning ordinance
- Commitment forms
- The applicable nonrefundable filing fee

The requirements for other petitions will vary; see the appropriate petition checklist.

## #2

### Your project is located in a special zoning district

**Examples may include special use exceptions for certain industrial-type operations and location-related restrictions related to Historic Preservation Districts or Flood Control Districts**

#### **Impact**

Zoning processes affect the budget and timeline of a project. Each process varies in cost and time, and public notice and hearings are required. Permits are not issued until the zoning processes have been approved.

#### **Helpful Hints**

Contact the Department of Metropolitan Development—Division of Planning to determine if the business is located in an area that requires an additional zoning-related process. Be sure to ask if the type of business requires a special exemption as well.

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## #3

### **Make sure your site meets development standards and determine if it requires a variance of development standards**

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#### **Impact**

A variance of development standards would be necessary when a property owner wants to build something that does not meet standards of the applicable zoning ordinance related to dimensional criteria such as lot size, frontage, access, height, size, setback, parking, loading open space etc.

#### **Helpful Hints**

Work with the Department of Metropolitan Development early in the process to determine if you require a variance for development standards. Public notice must be provided for all petitions. The Board of Zoning Appeals' (BZA) Rules of Procedure require that the petition provide a written legal notice (prepared by staff) to surrounding property owners, registered neighborhood groups and City-County Councilors at least 23 days before a hearing and that notice (provided by staff), requiring a refundable deposit, be placed on the property by the petitioner. Indiana Code requires that published public notice, which is the responsibility of staff, be provided at least ten days before a hearing.

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## #4

### **Identify any prior zoning commitments for your property**

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#### **Impact**

Commitments are restrictions agreed to by the property owner in conjunction with a land use petition. These commitments are enforceable on the existing owner and all future owners.

#### **Helpful Hints**

In order to address the issues, the property owner could begin complying with the commitment or file a petition with the Division of Planning to modify or terminate the commitment at a public hearing.

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## #5

### **Have all necessary permits before starting construction**

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#### **Impact**

If construction begins before permits are physically posted, a Stop Work Order will be issued by the Department of Code Enforcement. Work is prohibited until the proper permits are obtained and all permit fees are paid.

#### **Helpful Hints**

To ensure that your project moves forward as quickly as possible, contact Develop Indy's Director of Engagement or the Department of Code Enforcement to help you determine the fastest and most efficient method to obtain permits. The Department of Code Enforcement offers an accelerated plan review process that you may find useful. (Accelerated inspections are also available.)

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## #6

### Make sure you obtain all necessary permits

There are different types of permits that may be required depending on the size, scope and type of work being performed. Prior to issuance of some City permits, a Construction Design Release may need to be obtained from the State of Indiana.

#### **Impact**

Delays are created when permit applications are submitted sporadically or are incomplete. By understanding which permits are required for a project, a company can save time and money by avoiding these delays.

#### **Helpful Hints**

To the degree possible, all permit applications (structural, electrical, plumbing, etc.) should be submitted to the City at once. You do NOT have to wait for a Construction Design Release from the State of Indiana before submitting plans to the City and should submit your plans concurrently to the City and State. Any questions regarding what types of permits may be required should be directed to the Department of Code Enforcement. You can find a list of permits on the following pages.

## #7

### Ensure your structural permit application is complete and all supporting documentation is submitted with your application

#### **Impact**

Incomplete applications and a lack of supporting documents create unnecessary delays. Reviews are billed according to the amount of time spent on the project.

#### **Helpful Hints**

The Department of Code Enforcement has developed a checklist to assist both business owners and design professionals. This document, available online at [www.indy.gov/plan](http://www.indy.gov/plan), highlights tips to avoid issues and reduce review time. Also available on the website is helpful information related to review times that may better help you estimate the time it may take for your project to undergo review.

## #8

### Make sure your drainage plan meets City specifications

#### **Impact**

Until a drainage plan is approved, no construction permits will be issued. Once reviewed and approved, an approval letter will be issued. If revisions are required, a comment letter will be issued. The length of review often depends on the size and scope of the project, as well as quality of initial plans submitted.

#### **Helpful Hints**

Submit your drainage plans, as well as other permit forms, as soon as possible. You do NOT have to wait for a Construction Design Release from the State of Indiana before submitting plans to the City.



## #9

### Obtain necessary easement and/or right of way permits

#### Impact

On certain occasions, an easement agreement is required when a company needs to use its own property or another landowner's property to connect to a sewer. These agreements are also needed to dedicate streets and sewers to the City.

#### Helpful Hints

Determine if easements will be required for your project by contacting the Department of Code Enforcement. Begin negotiations as early as possible with private property owners.

Easement and/or right of way agreements must be legally recorded with the Marion County Recorder's Office. In terms of timing, the most unpredictable aspect of easements and/or rights of way involve negotiations with private property owners.

## #10

### Take Advantage of Sustainable Development Incentives

**The Office of Sustainability, in partnership with the Department of Code Enforcement, has developed an incentive for property owners and developers to renovate and/or construct sustainable buildings.**

#### Impact

The incentive, which qualifies building projects to receive up to a 50 percent reduction on permit fees associated with the project, also rewards building owners and developers for integrating sustainable design techniques into building projects.


#### Helpful Hints

To qualify for the rebate, projects must meet specific criteria that equate to measurable benefits to building owners, occupants and the citizens of Indianapolis.

## Zoning Classifications

Zoning Ordinances are a part of the Revised Code of the Consolidated City of Indianapolis and Marion County City Code. The entire city code is available through [Municode.com](http://Municode.com). A Zoning Synopsis Booklet, is available for download from the Department of Metropolitan Development, [www.indy.gov/dmd](http://www.indy.gov/dmd). The synopsis an abbreviation of the salient characteristics of the commercial zoning districts in Marion County. Consult the full text of the zoning ordinance for legal authority.

Zoning Classification	Definition
C-1	Office-Buffer Commercial District
C-2	High Intensity Office-Apartment Commercial District
C-3	Neighborhood Commercial Districts
C-3C	Corridor Commercial District
C-4	Community-Regional Commercial District
C-5	General Commercial District
C-6	Thoroughfare Service Commercial District
C-7	High Intensity Commercial District
C-ID	Commercial-Industrial District
C-S	Special Commercial District



Learn more about  
the types of permits  
required and how to  
go about obtaining  
the proper permit  
from the City

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# Permitting

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The Bureau of License and Permit Services of the Department of Code Enforcement grants a number of development related permits and licenses. Some of these may be required for the drainage, transportation and flood design during projects. Others may be required during the development of subdivisions, and for residential and non-residential projects within Marion County. Contractors'

licenses are also obtained through this bureau. Remember that work must be performed by a licensed/listed/registered contractor. Contact the Department of Code Enforcement for details.

## **Methods for Obtaining Permits**

Permits may be obtained through multiple avenues, depending on the permit type. Many permits can be obtained in person via a same-day review, by fax or online; while others may only be submitted through mail, courier or by drop-off. Contact the Department of Code Enforcement directly for more information on how to submit for a specific permit type.

The applicant is responsible for complying with all permit requirements and paying any fees associated with any permit application, regardless of the method of submission.

## **Expiration of Permits and Submittal of Completion Cards**

Permit expirations can vary depending on the type of permit obtained. See the specific validity parameters for each permit in the "Permit Types" on the following pages.

Completion cards are required to be submitted for the following permit types: structural, wrecking, electrical, heating and cooling and plumbing. The completion card signifies that the work is complete and initiates the final inspection. The card also permanently closes the permit and should be submitted to the Department of Code Enforcement at the conclusion of the work.

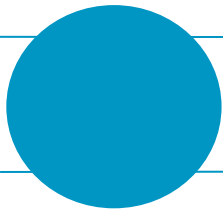
If the intended construction never started and/or the project is cancelled, the completion card submittal is still required prior to the permit expiration. The permit holder will indicate on the completion card that work is not complete or has not started, and the permit will be updated and closed. If the applicant would like to resume construction after the permit has been closed, he or she would need to apply for a new permit.

If the intended construction is on hold or delayed, the applicant has the option to extend or renew the permit to keep the permit active. If the applicant is prepared to resume work prior to the permit expiration, he or she may resume work with no additional action needed. Contact the Department of Code Enforcement to find out how to renew or extend a permit.

If the completion card is not submitted and the permit expires, an administrative fee will be assessed to the permit holder every 30 days until it is received or until the permit is renewed.

Cards may be submitted via email ([completioncards@indy.gov](mailto:completioncards@indy.gov)), in person, by mail or faxed to 317-327-8475.





# Types of Permits

## **Drainage**

In order for the City of Indianapolis to protect the safety, health, and general welfare of its citizens, it is important for land alterations to be compliant with standards and practices that result in proper stormwater drainage and sediment control. When developers, builders, engineers, contractors, and property owners are compliant with set requirements, these goals are achieved. By applying and being approved for a Stormwater Permit, the applicant has agreed to comply with set requirements. An applicant has up to one year after the Notice of Drainage approval is issued to obtain a permit and begin work. Once the drainage permit has been issued, the permit is valid for six months.

## **Driveway**

The City of Indianapolis, by law, has jurisdiction over all public thoroughfares in Marion County except those roads which are under the jurisdiction of the Indiana State Highway Commission, excluded cities or private ownership. In order to properly operate these thoroughfares, a definite policy on Access Control has been developed for obtaining permits for the construction of driveways and approaches. Once a review is complete, a Notice of Driveway Approval is issued. An applicant has up to one year after the approval is issued to obtain a permit and begin work. Once the driveway permit has been issued, the permit is valid for six months.

## **Electrical**

As stated in the Building Standards and Procedures, Sec. 536-201, any construction activity related to an *Electrical Power Distribution System* requires a permit, with the exception of the following activities:

Replacement of an attic fan, bathroom exhaust fan, range hood exhaust fan or whole house fan;

Installation of a single-phase electric circuit not exceeding sixty (60) amperes at a nominal 120/240 volts which involves the installation, modernization, replacement, service or repair of a heating system, space heating equipment, cooling system, space cooling equipment, a water heater or a food waste disposer for which a building permit has been issued; or

Installation of household appliances such as window air conditioners, refrigerators, refrigerators with automatic icemakers, ranges, microwave ovens, clothes washers, clothes dryers, dishwashers, food waste disposers and trash compactors when such installation does not include the installation of an electrical circuit; or Connection, provision or use of temporary electrical power for on-site construction

Electrical permits are valid for six months.

## **Encroachment**

Encroachment licenses or consents of encroachment may be required if proposed construction or a

proposed structure is located within the City's right-of-way or in an easement.

## **Heating and Cooling**

As stated in the Building Standards and Procedures, Sec. 536-201, any construction activity related to a heating, venting, air conditioning, or refrigeration system requires a permit, with the exception of the following activities:

Replacement of a water heater with one that is identical as to venting arrangement and type of fuel or energy input.

Extension of heating or cooling duct work.

Heating and Cooling permits are valid for six months. Contact the Department of Code Enforcement to find out who is eligible to apply for heating and cooling permits.

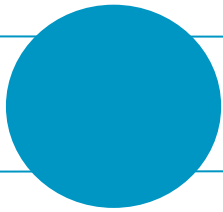
## **Improvement Location**

No structure shall be located, erected, altered or repaired upon any land within Marion County, until an Improvement Location Permit has been applied for by the owner (or authorized agent) and issued by the Department of Code Enforcement, unless specifically exempted. Improvement location permits are valid for two years.

Projects for qualified 501(c)3 organizations may qualify for 50 percent reduction in the improvement location permit fee.

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# Types of Permits

## **Plumbing**

As stated in the Building Standards and Procedures, Sec. 536-201, any construction activity related to a plumbing system requires a permit, with the exception of the following activities:

Replacement in kind of piping in a plumbing system when the replacement piping meets the same performance specifications and has the same capacity as the piping being replaced and not more than 20 percent of all piping in the structure is replaced.

Initial connection or reconnection of plumbing to a mobile home not placed on a permanent foundation located in a mobile home park licensed by the Indiana State Department of Health.

Replacement of appliances, fixtures, traps and valves in a plumbing system.

Replacement of a water heater with one that is identical as to venting arrangement and type of fuel or energy input.

Plumbing permits are valid for six months.

## **Right of Way**

Any occupation or excavation of the

public right of way, such as streets, alleys, and sidewalk areas, requires a permit and inspection. The Regulations of Activities in the Public Right of Way defines the requirements for permits, inspections, traffic control, and restoration standards for excavations.

The expiration of a right of way permit is specific to the length of time requested and approved on the application.

## **Sign**

Depending on the type of signs proposed, permits may be required before installation occurs. However, permits are not required for routine maintenance or changing of the parts or copy of a sign for which a Sign Permit has previously been issued; including changing a sign face providing that the maintenance or change of parts or copy does not alter the surface area, height, or otherwise render the sign nonconforming, or increase the existing degree of nonconformity.

Sign permits are valid for two years.

Additional sign permits may also be required from any of the following Excluded Cities within Marion County: Beech Grove, Lawrence,

Speedway and Southport.

## **Structural**

The City of Indianapolis uses structural permits to regulate construction and ensure that all construction in the city is safe. There are also federal, state and local laws that govern construction in specified areas, such as those in historic preservation districts, well-field protection areas, and flood plain development. To view a complete copy of the building code, please visit the State of Indiana's website at [www.in.gov](http://www.in.gov).

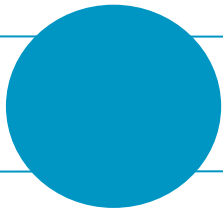
Structural permits are valid for six months.

## **Wrecking**

Wrecking permits must be signed by the title holder of the property and obtained by either the property owner, general contractor or wrecking contractor. In certain situations, a wrecking contractor is the only party who can obtain a wrecking permit.

Residential wrecking permits are valid for 30 days; non-residential wrecking permits are valid for 60 days.

NOTE: Permit fees are developed using an actuarial model. Each permit fee reflects the true cost of administering the permit and performing the associated inspection. A fee schedule may be found in the "Resources" tab of the Department of Code Enforcement website [www.indy.gov/dce](http://www.indy.gov/dce).



# Resource Directory

## **Develop Indy**

Develop Indy is Marion County's local economic development organization dedicated to attracting, retaining and expanding businesses and serving as a catalyst for capital investment and quality job growth in Indianapolis/Marion County.

(317) 808-3232

[www.developindy.com](http://www.developindy.com)

## **Department of Metropolitan Development, Current Planning**

Current planning handles zoning and land use petitions for Indianapolis/Marion County.

(317) 327-3698

Planner on call: (317) 327-5155

[www.indy.gov/dmd](http://www.indy.gov/dmd)

## **Department of Code Enforcement**

The Department of Code Enforcement is responsible for licensing, permitting, inspection, enforcement, and abatement practices, as well as local government oversight of property use/safety and maintenance, business, event, professional, and construction industries.

(317) 327-8700

[www.indy.gov/dce](http://www.indy.gov/dce)

## **Department of Public Works**

The Department of Public Works maintains public infrastructure, manages municipal solid waste collection and ensures a healthy, safe and natural environment.

(317) 327-4000

[www.indy.gov/dpw](http://www.indy.gov/dpw)

## **Minority, Women and Veteran Business Affairs**

The Department of Minority, Women and Veteran Business Development strives to enhance the city's growth and economic stability through promotion of contracting and procurement opportunities for Minority-, Women-, and Veteran-Owned Businesses.

(317) 327-5262

[www.indy.gov/dmwbd](http://www.indy.gov/dmwbd)

## **Marion County Health Department**

The Marion County Health Department promotes and protects the health of everyone in the community.

(317) 221-2000

[www.mchd.com](http://www.mchd.com)

## **Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission**

The Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission exists to preserve the character and fabric of historically significant areas and structures for all present and future citizens of Indianapolis/Marion County.

(317) 327-4406

[www.indy.gov/dmd](http://www.indy.gov/dmd)

## **Marion County Recorder's Office**

The Recorder's Office makes all recorded documents a matter of public record, files Uniform Commercial Code Instruments, supplies copies of any instrument and certifies to those recorded upon request and provides public access to all recorded documents.

(317) 327-4020

[www.indy.gov/recorder](http://www.indy.gov/recorder)

## **Marion County Assessor's Office**

The Marion County Assessor's Office locates, identifies, and appraises all taxable property accurately, uniformly, and equitably in accordance with Indiana law.

(317) 327-4907

[www.indy.gov/assessor](http://www.indy.gov/assessor)

## **Business Ownership Initiative of Indiana**

A not-for-profit organization in Central Indiana devoted to helping people to start or grow a business.

(317) 917-3266

[www.businessownership.org](http://www.businessownership.org)

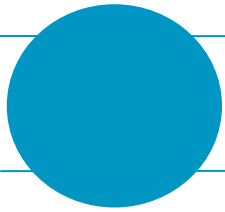
## **Indiana Secretary of State**

Present responsibilities include chartering of new business, regulation of the securities industry, oversight of state elections and working closely with vehicle dealerships throughout Indiana.

(317) 232-6531

[www.in.gov/sos](http://www.in.gov/sos)

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# Resource Directory

## **Indiana Department of Environmental Management**

IDEM's mission is to implement federal and state regulations to protect human health and the environment while allowing the environmentally sound operations of industrial, agricultural, commercial and government activities vital to a prosperous economy.  
(317) 232-8603  
[www.in.gov/idem](http://www.in.gov/idem)

## **Indiana Department of Homeland Security Division of Fire and Building Safety**

The Division of Fire and Building Safety investigates suspicious fires, promotes prevention, administers building plan review, enforces fire and building safety codes in all public buildings, regulates and coordinates emergency services, emergency medical services and hazardous material response and oversees and conducts inspections of child care facilities, boilers and pressure vessels, elevators and amusements.  
(317) 232-2222  
[www.in.gov/dhs](http://www.in.gov/dhs)

## **Indianapolis Power and Light Company**

IPL provides retail electric service to more than 470,000 residential, commercial and industrial customers in Indianapolis and other Central Indiana communities.  
(317) 261-8222  
[www.iplpower.com](http://www.iplpower.com)

## **Citizen's Energy Group**

Provide services related to gas, water, sanitary sewers and thermal energy.  
(317) 927-4328  
[www.citizensenergygroup.com](http://www.citizensenergygroup.com)

## **Municode**

Current copy of the Revised Code of Indianapolis/  
Marion County.  
[www.municode.com](http://www.municode.com)

## **Permit and Case Research**

Research permits and enforcement cases within the Department of Code Enforcement.  
[www.indy.gov/dce/research](http://www.indy.gov/dce/research)

## **State of Indiana**

[www.in.gov](http://www.in.gov)

## **Excluded Cities and Towns**

Building permits and inspections for any of the excluded cities/towns are administered by that city/town. Building permits include, but may not be limited to: structural, electrical, plumbing, heating and cooling and wrecking.

Zoning related permits and inspections are administered by the City of Indianapolis, Department of Code Enforcement. Some zoning related permits are issued by both the Department of Code Enforcement and the applicable Excluded City.

Contact both the Department of Code Enforcement and the applicable Excluded City for additional information on specific permit requirements.

## **City of Beech Grove**

(317) 788-4977  
[www.beechgrove.com](http://www.beechgrove.com)

## **City of Lawrence**

(317) 545-6191  
[www.cityoflawrence.org](http://www.cityoflawrence.org)

## **City of Southport**

(317) 786-3585  
[www.cityofsouthport.org](http://www.cityofsouthport.org)

## **Town of Speedway**

(317) 246-4111  
[www.townofspeedway.org](http://www.townofspeedway.org)

